

es north of Dolores in the scenic scene of a conflict between resi- at supports the town. Big problem ch the Rico Argentine plant has

periodically released and have caused roofs and clotheslines to corrode. Greatest fear of the residents is not the fumes but that the plant may close down if it is pressured. (Herald photo)

Sulphur Fumes Bring Problem in Rico

By TOM WILSON
(First of a Series)

RICO — The beautiful moun- tain town of Rico (pop. 350) is sick.

Acrid sulphur fumes which periodically sweep into this tiny mountain center from the Rico Argentine acid plant three miles above Rico have split Rico's residents into bitter and fear-laden factions.

Yet, is a problem residents will not discuss openly.

A groping town board, fear- ful of driving off the company has taken no direct action.

After two years of periodic sulphur fume smogs, only one resident has had the courage to complain openly to the town board.

The San Juan Basin Health unit is stalemated after a 24-month battle to force the plant to correct the pollution. Colo- radio has no laws making air pollution illegal. The unit lacks funds, equipment and manpower to definitely prove whether or not the fume cause ill health.

The Rico Argentine employs about 70 men. Over 90 per cent of Rico's population is directly dependent on the company for income. The company operates the Rico telephone system, put

in its own gas lines for em- ployes, and owns and operates the town's movie theater.

Company officials insist there has been no long term problem. They admit to minor troubles this winter. But they claim they have solved them.

"We had a number of pieces of gear to go bad on us last fall," Orville Jhanke, general superintendent of the company stated. "But we have fixed them now."

At the time this reporter was in Rico, there were no fumes coming from the company's plant. The air was clear and fresh.

Aggravating the problem is the fact that there is apparently no rapport between the town fathers and the company. The plant was built in 1953.

Mayor Myron L. Jones, a youthful gold mine operator, refused to admit any conflict between the town board and the company. The town is filled with talk that the town board intends to bring an injunction.

"I won't say that the board intends to bring an injunction and I won't say that the board does not intend to bring action," Jones said.

Jones was asked if the fumes had an effect on the town's residents' health. He said he didn't know. He admitted many metal roofs in town have been corroded. Jones's father works at the plant.

But Robert A. Fahrion, a member of the town board, was more emphatic about reations

waste a swath of trees two miles long and one mile wide.

"The cause of the trees dy- ing is blight," Jahnke said. "I've seen it happen like this other places."

But a forestry expert with in- timate experience with the Rico problems places the blame di- rectly on the acid fumes.

"The fumes attacked the broadleaved trees such as aspen first. Then the conifers began dying."

The expert said that he be- lieved that the fumes suffocate the trees by plugging up the pores in leaves. The expert said that damage to trees was worst near the plant and lessened as distance from the plant in- creased. Most of the trees are on patented land or in Rico. A

(Continued on Page 4)

Standard Uranium Buys Shenandoah, Ltd.

DURANGO — With invest- ment of an additional half mil- lion dollars in the Silverton area, Standard Uranium Corp. has exercised its option to purchase mining properties and assets in San Juan county of Shenandoah, Ltd.

Shenandoah, Ltd., was form- ed by Standard and Marcy-

chairman of the Democratic party.

The election-year crisis has brought suspension of 17 police officers accused of burglary, bribery, robbery or pilfering.

The scandal boiled up shortly after selection of state and Cook County candidates for the Dem- ocratic April 12 primaries by Daley's organization.

A grand jury investigation of the police charge is being guid- ed by 'Daley' political arch enemy, Republican State's Atty. Benjamin S. Adamowski. It has been accompanied by a drumfire of public statements by Daley, Adamowski and oth- er officials.

Hopes Dwindle For Trapped Men

COALBROOK, South Africa (AP) — Rescue workers Saturday night were pulled out of a coal mine where 440 men have been trapped for two days by a giant rock fall.

There were reports that an- other rock slide had occurred deep in the mine.

Hopes for reaching the en- tombed men dwindled further with the announcement that res- cue teams were being with- drawn. No sound has been heard from them since they were cut off.

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more attention and there will be closer supervision," Skiffington predicted, if this method is fol- lowed.

The Manitou Springs senator also has introduced a bill to reduce state income taxes by 10 per cent, but it is considered dead for the year.

There was some question a- bout the legality of introducing a tax levy repeal bill in the Senate, Skiffington said, but he has been advised it is legal.

The Constitution reserves to the House of Representatives the right to introduce revenue- raising bills and sometimes revenue-cutting bills are con- sidered in the same category.

Odom on Bond, Now in Florida

DURANGO — Floyd Odom, released by the district attor- ney's office in December after winning a directed verdict in his trial for assault of Evelyn Berry last summer and being held for several months on re- lated charges, is now in Flori- da.

He was released to Houston county, Ala., authorities after being indicted by a grand jury there on grand larceny charges filed by his former wife.

Sheriff Alvin D. Davis of Dothan said Odom's former wife swore out the warrant which accuses Odom of twist- ing several diamond rings from her fingers following their marital troubles.

Odom waived extraditon in Colorado and returned to Dot- han, where he has since been free on bond. No date has been set for trial, Sheriff Davis re- ported.

Frank E. (Sam) Maynes, defense attorney in Durango,

DURANGO-CORTEZ
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HERALD

Enraged Settlers Surge in Algiers

ALGIERS (AP) — French set-

All prices in this ad good in Durango
We reserve the right to limit quantities



Only Safeway Gives You Both... A Lower Price

Pepsodent Toothpaste
You'll wonder where it

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★ Sulphur

(Continued from Page 1)
few are on San Juan National
forest land.

Because of the town's loca-
tion in a canyon-like valley,
damage from the fumes is
greater than if it were located
in the plains. Canyon drafts
sweep the fumes up and down
the valley.

On Saturday, Jan. 9, an em-
ployee accidentally caused the
plant to produce oleum, a soup-
ed up fulminating sulphuric
acid. Normally, the acid would
be in liquid form. However,
this was gaseous.

The oleum poured from a
company stack into thick fog.
An air inversion caused the
fumes to sweep down onto
Rico. For two days, the fumes
made eyes water, irritated
coughs and cut down visibility
to a few feet.

"I couldn't see 20 feet," a
resident said. "My children
couldn't play outside."

The corrosive effect of the
fumes was proven last April
by tests made by the San Juan
Basin Health unit. Standard
steel plates, measuring one inch
by four inches, were placed in
town and at a location four
miles south of Rico.

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Smiling in Dublin
ra and his wife
versary recently.

A plate located at the Tony
Ferdinando residence on Corn-
mercial street in Rico received
even times as much corrosion
as the plate located south of
town. The effect on metal roofs
in Rico is evident to an obser-
ver. The edges of the roofs and
nail holes show apparent cor-
rosion.

The health unit intends to
take further tests to determine
the strength of pollution at
peaks when the plant is emit-
ting the fumes. The unit pre-
viously took a 60-day test in
June and July to find the aver-
age amount of sulphur fumes
in the air. However, the plant
was closed for 12 days during
that time. Consequently, the
tests were inconclusive.

What is the effect of the
fumes on health?

Dr. Arthur Warner of the
Basin Health unit said Friday
that the fumes cause residents
to wheeze and cough. It burns
their eyes. Because of the
fumes and coughing, throats be-
come sore.

Dr. Warner pointed out that
"we do not know for sure, but
we have reason to suspect that
chronic irritation such as
breathing sulphur fumes is one
of the factors leading to can-
cer."

However, Dr. James Hites
who regularly treats Rico pati-
ents had a different opinion.
Hites said that since October,
when he began his Rico prac-
tice, he has treated only one pa-
tient that claimed to be bother-
ed by the fumes. He added,
however, that it was almost im-
possible to prove conclusively
that the fumes do cause all-
ments.

Dr. Hites said that Rico chil-
dren appear to have more colds
and coughs than children in
Dove Creek. However, he said
that the Rico students must
travel from high, cold Rico
down to Dove Creek to school.
He explained that this may
cause the colds.

Dr. Hites, along with his part-
ners Dr. Ralph Clark and Dr.
E. G. Merritt, receives office
space from the Rico Argenti-
Co. to handle their practice.
Also, they normally treat
plant injuries.

(The second story in this
series will deal with efforts
the plant has taken and plans
to take to correct the pollu-
tion.)

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